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ABSTRACT

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Running head: METAPHORS FOR VOCATION

Metaphors for Vocation and Career

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Abstract

The role of metaphors in communicating the meaning of vocation and career is explored in the work of Frank Parsons (author of the 1909 classic, *Choosing a Vocation*), among career clients, and among contemporary career counselors. Exemplars of metaphors for career are provided across these three sources. Recommendations are made for the incorporation of metaphors into career counseling and the development of novel career assessment instruments.

Metaphors for Vocation and Career

Frank Parsons essentially created the professional discipline known variously as vocational guidance, vocational psychology, career development, and career counseling. He is best remembered for his 1909 (1909/1989) work *Choosing a Vocation*, published posthumously. According to Crites (1969), Parsons laid the "conceptual cornerstones" (p. 4) for what became the major research orientation for the field for more than three decades. As Crites noted, Parsons was not the first to discuss vocational choice or guidance. Several of Parsons' core ideas were anticipated in earlier eras (Carson & Altai, 1994; Chabassus & Zytowski, 1987; Dumont & Carson, 1995). However, Parsons was the first to succeed in persuading others that a professional field needed to exist that served to guide individuals in a scientifically sound method for choosing careers.

One reason Parsons (1909/1989) was so successful in his persuasive effort was that he created a set of powerful metaphors to clarify for others what he meant by "career" and related concepts. He did this purposefully:

> The counselor should also make a special effort to master and use the concrete form of suggestions....The picture-method of presenting the case never fails to interest the youth, and often proves far more convincing than any form of direct statement that could be used (p. 107).

In doing so, Parsons primarily relied on what Brown (1977/1989) calls "illustrative metaphors". Theorists (Plato, John Stuart Mill, Sigmund Freud) have long relied on illustrative metaphors to make their points concretely and persuasively (see Brown, p. 107). Collin (1997) notes that career development theorists have also relied on basic or root metaphors in their construction and communication.

But before detailing Parsons' use of metaphors, we suggest the need for some clarification of what a metaphor is, and the development of more precise vocabulary to refer to components of metaphors. The nature of metaphor has emerged as a central issue in the psycholinguistic literature, and that the use of nonliteral language has "led to an exciting convergence of many fields" (Katz, Turner, Gibbs, & Cacciari, 1998, p. 188). A metaphor is "the use of a term for one thing to describe another because of some kind of similarity between them or between their relations to other things" (Jaynes, p. 48). Metaphors always have two terms. According to Jaynes, one of these terms is the thing to be described -- the "metaphrand" -- and the other is "the thing or relation used to elucidate it, the metaphier" (p. 48). Known metaphiers work on unknown metaphrands. Today, we think we understand what a career is, and perhaps today the word "career" can function as a metaphier. But in Parsons' day it was different; career was as abstract a concept then as now, but it was less well understood then, and therefore it could not function effectively as a metaphier. Parsons supplied a set of metaphiers that helped subsequent theorists, practitioners, and clients better understand the career concept.

Parsons (1909/1989) primarily relied on three metaphors related to career counseling: Career = Building; Planful career = Sailing with chart and compass; Rational career choice = Competing in a race without handicaps. We will provide examples of his use of each metaphor.

Career = Building. This is probably the metaphor Parsons (1909/1989) uses most frequently, and presumably he relied on it extensively in his counseling. He extended the metaphor to the relationship of the architect to the development of the plan that leads to the house or building. In Parsons' metaphor, the career:building::career counselor:architect (i.e., career is to building as career counselor is to architect.) The career counselor is the architect of the successful career. Parson's career counselor was no slouch, was not passive; the counselor

actively persuades the client to make optimal use of his or her talents and direct them in a socially useful and wise direction.

> The building of a career is quite as difficult a problem as the building of a house, yet few ever sit down with pencil to paper, with expert information, to plan a working career and deal with life problems scientifically, as they would deal with the problem of building a house, taking advice of an architect to help them. (p. 4)

> No one would think of building a dwelling or a business block without carefully selecting an appropriate and advantageous site and drawing out a well-considered plan with the help of an architect or expert builder. (p. 101)

Parsons also relies on the career as house (or building) metaphor as the basis for cautioning too precipitous a career change:

> You have a house half or two-thirds built, the walls well up, almost ready to put the roof on, now is it wise to leave the building you have so nearly completed and go off to a new location; dig a new cellar and begin building all over again, when you do not know that you will like the new building any better than this one, after you get it? (p. 24; see also p. 141)

Parsons also moralizes that it is better to have a respectable career than to be what we have come to call a robber-baron; in particular, Parsons directs scorn on John Rockefeller (via this metaphor):

> It is better to build a small house on solid rock than a palace on quicksand. (p. 50)

The career as building metaphor also extends into the elements of the building:

Analytic power is one of the cornerstones of mastery and achievement. (p. 10) In short, Parsons relied heavily on the career as building metaphor in conveying his understanding of the nature of the career and career counseling.

Planful career = Sailing with chart and compass. Parsons (1909/1989) believed that good careers depended on good planning. Those who failed to plan, or at least understand where they were trying to head, would be at risk for aimless wandering. He depended on the nautical metaphor of aimless drifting to explicate the negative consequences of poor career planning:

> Boys generally drift into some line of work by chance, proximity, or uninformed selection. (p. 4)

> It is better to sail with compass and chart than to drift into an occupation haphazardly or by chance, proximity, or uninformed selection; and drift on through it without reaching any port worthy of voyage. (p. 101)

Actually, the career or vocation as a ship has historical roots at least as far back as the early nineteenth century, when Ralph Waldo Emerson (1841) discussed the nature of a vocation in *On Character and Self-Reliance*:

> Each man has his own vocation. The talent is his call. There is one direction in which all space is open to him. He has faculties silently inviting him thither to endless exertion. He is like a ship in a river; he runs against obstructions on every side but one, on that side all obstruction is taken away and he sweeps over a deepening channel into an infinite sea.

Subsequent authors have elaborated on this career as sailing theme. Perhaps the most dramatic such example is that provided by Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman (1990), through their metaphor of the sailing vessel *Decision Making*:

> We think of career as part of an exciting journey, rather than as a goal-oriented drudgery that is imposed on individuals by society. In an attempt to foster this attitude in the reader, we have viewed the lifecareer process as analogous to an expedition on open seas. Just as the horizons are seemingly infinite at sea, we review the career process as an ongoing process of growth and change, or evolution that is limitless. Just as a ship's captain can map navigational routes, using the stars, the wind, and sea currents, the individual can make career choices based on nature, social opportunities, and personal inclinations. (Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, pp. 309-310)

Parsons' contribution to this metaphoric understanding of the career concept via the ship metaphor may be his emphasis on planful behavior, i.e., reliance on charts and intended routes. Certainly, Emerson's earlier use of ship metaphor assumed a much different underlying career concept, with the individual worker's behavior constrained tightly by dispositional constraints (the ship on the river).

Our review of the use of metaphors for vocation and career suggests metaphors based on transportation or at least movement are common. For example, some terms such as "career ladder" and "on the right career track" (followed by "fast-track" and more recently by "mommy track") appeared early in the century. Air or space travel metaphors came after mid-century, such as having a career that "really takes off'. Automotive metaphors have also become common over the course of the century, e.g., "changing lanes" or "jump-starting your career."

For example, a recent advertisement by Mundelein College of Loyola University of Chicago ("Is your career stalled", 1999) asks, "Is your career stalled in the 20th century? Jump start it today. Get the education you need now to advance your career to 2000 and beyond."

Rational career choice = Career as competition (avoid handicaps). Parsons (1909/1989) urged clients to get a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and the requirements of different occupations, and then to choose an occupation that played to their strengths and minimized their weaknesses. In order to persuade his clients that this made sense as a strategy, he played on their competitiveness, which may say much about the spirit of his times:

> Do you want to run a race with an iron ball tied around your leg, or would you rather enter a race where you can run free like the rest? (p. 24; see also p. 117)

Parsons appeared to use this metaphor when he needed to confront a client with the intention of changing their career goal. In this use of metaphors he essentially used metaphors as a therapeutic intervention, just as metaphors are often used in psychotherapy as a form of indirect confrontation (see Barker, 1985).

Metaphors from Career Clients

Data on career metaphors were collecting through a study on a sample of 122 adult career clients in Montreal, mostly undergraduate students at McGill University. Data from this sample have previously been reported by Carson (1996; also study I of Carson, Stalikas, & Bizot, 1997). Measures in this study included a question on a how the client might describe their current career situation in terms of a metaphor or metaphors. Forty-seven of the clients provided career metaphors (one provided two metaphors). We were struck by the poignancy of many of the metaphors, but perhaps it is not surprising as this was a clinical population seeking

help for career problems. Many of the metaphors may be roughly grouped into two of Parsons' three general metaphors: career as voyage or career as competition. Others seem to bear little similarity to Parsons' metaphors, and there was little reflection of his metaphor of career as building.

By far the most common metaphor was that of career as voyage, movement, travel, and vehicle, even including several references to ships or travel on water; this suggests a continuing viability of Parson's sea travel metaphor, but broadened into movement and travel in general. Many of these metaphors have to do with animals. There was little of Parsons' sense of planfulness in the clients' metaphors. Many of the metaphors suggest a passive passage through the ups and downs of life, where some phenomena may attract interest (if momentarily), but in general there is only random drift or pointless repetition:

> A ship that's passing time in the night until an island sparks my attention. It's as if I'm in a boat, sailing towards nowhere specific. The crew tries to maintain the boat in balance. The winds calm down at times. The compass is broken, so they could go towards an island or further into the ocean.

> My career is a car. During good times it is going at regular speed, during hectic times it is speeding, and during bad times it is hitting pot holes.

> My job is like a beat up old car. It just gets me by and that's all.

> It's like a roller coaster. I have my ups and downs but enjoy it.

It is like a Ferris wheel. There are times when I feel high and fluttery with nerves but then it starts to come down and I start to relax and calm.

It's like a snail. It moves along really slowly, and sometimes it retreats into its shell. I will find an interest and pursue it, but always get to a point where I don't know what to do next, and so I just retreat.

And at the extreme is what Parsons' referred to as aimless drift or pointless effort:

I sometimes feel like an autumn leaf caught in a whirlwind.

I feel like a ping-pong ball bouncing back and forth and making no real headway. I go full speed in one direction only to come to a halt and go back and start again. This bouncing is very tiring. I feel I can't make long-term decisions until I can get the ball moving in one direction only.

I'm running all the time and going nowhere.

Walking up a staircase from the edge of a cliff leading to the sky. The staircase is very stable but over the cliff is an abyss.

A variation on the movement theme is movement that requires making choices that cut off other options and result in increasing specialization. The client's fear is that any choice may result in elimination of a potentially better choice. Although not represented in these metaphors from this sample, the first author has heard this concern expressed by career clients as being like driving down the highway in a car, seeing various exits from the highway go by one by

one, and those are like career opportunities that have been passed by, and are thereafter unavailable as options. A panic association with choice anxiety may ensue.

> I think of my present situation as climbing a tree. I began with a very thick and sturdy and structured base, with a focus that involved climbing up, towards some definite goal. However, the higher I climb, the more shaky and thin the branches are, and how numerous are the paths to climb! But I'm unsure if any one path is more secure, will reach high enough, and the fear of falling off is everpresent. Everything spreads and specializes.

> I feel like I am on the quai to a train. Some of my friends or acquaintances are already on board the train. The train is first class. It has not left the train station just yet, but I must decide now if I get onboard. The next train to come will get me nowhere as far as this one, which means I would rather not take the second one, which is second class in any case. I also know or feel that there is, on another quai, another train that could take me somewhere I have to go. Yet I must find this train if I want to get onboard. Of course, in the end I make no decision. I won't get onboard any train.

A particularly disturbing variant of the ship metaphor showed the client as being at risk for drowning, or as just barely keeping on top of the water's surface:

> My career to date is like the path of a water spider on the surface of a pond, never sinking very deep and hurtling from one spot to the next in sharp bursts.

> Walking on water. If I lose faith, I'll drown. Yet, rm leaming how to believe, to have faith...
>
> I felt as though I was treading water to keep up with current knowledge.
>
> The area I am in presently feels like a whirlpool. I feel as though I am spinning out of control slowly to the bottom of the whirlpool.
>
> I am slowly sinking into a pit of quicksand with a thick fog all around. I am very weary and my struggles become slower.

The career as competition theme emerged in the client comments not so much as a desire to optimally match their competencies and enthusiasms to the opportunities afforded by occupations, but rather as competition as nature red in tooth and claw:

> I am a wolf in a forest during a cold and dark winter. I am hungry and so are the other members of the pack (and maybe other animal populations) so that I don't die of hunger.
>
> Lion eating a piece of raw meat.

A variation of this metaphor is that the client is a wild animal that has somehow been trapped or injured, and must await an opportunity to escape toward freedom:

> As an eagle whose wings have been clipped. I know I can soar to great heights when given the opportunity, but it is taking that first step of breaking free of my psychological constraints and taking off.

> Right now I am an animal stuck in someone's cottage or chalet, and making the best of it until the time comes for me to escape into the forest and be free again.

Some of the remaining career metaphors were more positive and expressed the joy of sampling various career options, but in general the career metaphors were fairly dark, anxious, and depressing. Parsons' career as building was entirely absent, except when the house or building was conceived as a trap or prison, as in the chalet metaphor immediately above, or in some others:

> A dark corridor, I can't see ahead if there are turns or bumpy floors. I can't even see around myself. rm surrounded by darkness and it's very frightening and unsettling.

> My academic life is like a room comprised of lots of doors. The doors are constantly opening and closing and it's hard to tell when I should dart through one. They all look the same.

Completely absent was the notion of a career plan as being like a building.

The general sense of despair, aimlessness, drift, and bloody raw violence through which these clients appeared to conceptualize their academic work and career progress is, frankly, sad. To the degree that it is possible to teach such clients new metaphors that lead to more positive and effective adjustment to the tasks of career development, such educative efforts would appear to be quite desirable. It strikes us that Parsons' metaphors are much more positive and constructively motivating than those held by these clients.

Use of Metaphor in Career Counseling

Metaphors may be utilized in career counseling for a variety of purposes. For example, they might be used to help explain an otherwise difficult-to-describe phenomenon. Helping the client to develop a metaphor for his or her current career situation can provide a framework for thinking about situation in a unique manner. Gysbers and Moore (1987) suggested that the use of metaphors in career counseling could effectively bridge the client's internal world with universal experiences or thought-provoking stories. In this way, they can become indicators of a client's unconscious career wishes. Client-generated metaphors can provide an influential new language for the career counseling process and become powerful tools for insight and change in career counseling. Metaphors may thus be helpful when a client is having difficulty articulating his or her experience, or when he or she is having difficulty describing feelings associated with their career situation.

Other purposes for using metaphor in career counseling might include (a) to develop rapport through constructing meaning with a client, therby indicating understanding and communication, (b) to help clients understand the nature of change in career development over the lifespan, (c) in helping a client get "unstuck" from previous ways of thinking about a career or shifting how they view their career (e.g., a depressed client may view their career as a "sinking ship," but a guided extension of this metaphor may lead eventually to a shift in this view to an "opportunity to get off the boat and get on a different one"), (d) to assist in the generation of ideas and use of imagination of career possibilities, and (e) to help assess whether a client is generally indecisive or undecided about a career.

Examples of metaphors used by career professionals. Endless different metaphors can be used to describe a career. The second author surveyed a group of career counselors via a listserv on the intemet. Listserve subscribers were asked for examples of metaphors that the

counselors had used with career clients. In addition, the first and second author asked the same of participants attending a presentation on metaphors for career and vocation.

One counselor said that a career can be compared to a "journey" which can be broken down into two aspects: process and product. Often, careers do not follow the exact path that we might intend. Many times there are long and winding twists and turns in the road that come up unexpectedly. There is usually a goal in our career futures for which we are shooting, whether that be a particular title, salary, or situation which allows us to achieve other smaller goals.

A mountain might represent one's career path. The climb may be relatively easy at the beginning, but gets more difficult as you get closer to the top, partly because the climb becomes steeper and rockier (with fewer trees to grab onto for leverage) and there is less room at the top.

One career counselor gave this example of a metaphor she has used with career clients in a university career center:

> I've had a good response to using the SUV metaphor (sports utility vehicles) to describe the manner in which a successful job seeker conducts her search. In other words, you can't just stay "in between the lines/pavement" you have to get in gear (4 wheel-drive) and be ready to do some "off the road/pavement" searching. Even the names of popular SUVs are conducive to the career planning and job search process, such as Ford's Explorer, Nissan's Pathfinder, Toyota's Forerunner, Subaru's Forester, GM's Tracker. All suggest getting off the beaten path to flush those exciting job opportunities out of the brush. These SUVs are popular with the students and are known as rough, rugged, go anywhere and do anything types of transportation. (D. E. Kohler, personal communication, August 23, 1999)

Another college career counselor shared the following regarding metaphor:

> One of my favorite metaphors is from the book "Discovering Your Career in Business" by Timothy Butler and James Waldroop at the Harvard School of Business. In chapter two they use Homer's *The Odyssey* to illustrate some simple principles in career planning. Specifically, they describe how Odysseus and his men (and many before them) were lured by the beautiful song of the Sirens, often to their death. Similarly, many individuals are lured from (or into) career choices by someone else's notion of what they should be doing. Some examples of these modem "sirens" include money and status, family expectations, and competitive strivings with parents, siblings etc. Other examples are given [in the book] as well. (S. Riley, personal communication, August 31, 1999)

This career counselor responded by giving an example of how she uses metaphor to describe the career development process:

> I use the buying a car analogy in talking about career development:
>
> 1) Assess yourself. (skills, personality, interests)
>
> 2) Assess what's out there in terms of careers.
>
> 3) See if there is a fit.
>
> 4) Test out our decision through part-time jobs/intemships.
>
> 5) Develop a plan for achieving your goals.
>
> For example:
>
> 1) Assess yourself Are you practical, responsible with two kids and a dog and need a station wagon, or are you fun loving, wild, showy and like attention so you want a sports car?

2) Have you read the blue book to see what new makes and models exist and what they cost? Have you read the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, etc. to see what new careers exist and what qualifications are needed?

3) Does your personality, skills etc. fit the career/car? (i.e. can you drive stick shift. Are you tall enough to get into a pick up truck?)

4) Have you test-driven the car?

5) Have you mapped out how you are going to pay for the car? What dealerships you are going to look at? Are you doing a regional, local, or national search? In person or on-line, etc.?

I just find that using metaphors makes the process more relevant for students and holds their attention better. Depending on what I say, it generates occasional laughs as well. In this case (with the exception of international students possibly), this seems to be one that most can relate to. (V. M. Stalcup, personal communication, August 23, 1999)

Examples of metaphors for the job search included:

Job searching is a marathon rather than a sprint. (Denham, T. J., personal communication, August 23, 1999)

Job searching is like studying. You want to pace yourself rather than trying to cram the night before. (Denham, T. J., personal communication, August 23, 1999)

Job searching is like registering for another course; you take it pass/fail. (Denham, T. J., personal communication, August 23, 1999)

Settings for using metaphors. An advantage for the use of metaphors in career work is that they are portable to virtually any setting, since all that they require is a bit of thought and imagination. In addition to their use in idividual counseling, counselors can also use metaphor brainstorming as an intervention in a workshop or classroom setting. Metaphors can be generated individually and written down by participants, to be shared with the group later in the session, or participants can share their metaphors as a facilitator writes them on newsprint or a chalkboard to be shared with the group. This sharing tends to elicit interaction between participants who can thus get ideas from others and may see their career in a different light as a result. Healthy competition can develop which may motivate participants to generate new ideas. However, one must be careful to keep participants from allowing the competition to develop into an evaluation of each others' metaphors.

Types of clients for whom metaphors may be helpful. Metaphors may be enjoyable to generate in a career counseling situation where good rapport has already established. They may also help "break the ice" with resistant or defensive clients. For example, they may work well for an intellectualizing or resistant client where it does not work to use a direct or didactic psychoeducational approach (see Barker, 1985). In this case, a metaphor may work by getting the metaphoric message around the normal defensive processes used by the client.

Much in the way leaming styles can be used to help find appropriate methods for teaching students (e.g., visual, auditory), there may be certain types of clients for whom metaphor might be a more helpful career tool. For example, a creative, imaginative client may be open to and very much enjoy using a creative technique to explore his or her perception of career, whereas a client who is not particularly imaginative or has other concerns (e.g., they are also depressed) might have a more difficult time using metaphors, at least without some

assistance. However, the type of metaphor used must be tailed to meet the capacities of the client; clients unable to understand the metaphoric nature of a comment may be more than merely puzzled, and may in fact feel that they are plodding or unimaginative (thus possibly resulting in negative self-evaluations).

However, as stated earlier, metaphor may also be a useful tool for getting a client to see her or his situation in a different light. For example, a depressed client may develop a metaphor such as a "dead end road" to describe his or her career. A counselor might help the client see things differently by asking what the client did the last time they came to a point in their career that seemed like a dead end. Or if they cannot think of a time in the past when this occurred, the counselor can use the metaphor to help the client see some options for changing the situation. For example, if the client was driving and they hit a dead end, what might they do to get out? The client or counselor might identify options including turning around and going back the way they came, getting out of the car and looking around to see what is at the dead end, etc. Of course, such metaphoric options must then be translated into "real world" descriptions of what they mean in terms of career development behavior.

Other issues for consideration in deciding whether to use a metaphor. Using metaphor is much like using a projective test in that the interpretation of the metaphor depends on the skills of the clinician, in a manner akin to the interpretation of dreams. Part of the skill of the counselor is knowledge and use of methods for eliciting elaboration on the metaphor by the client. Another aspect is in interpreting the meaning of the metaphor. In the latter case, interpretation can be done by either the client or the counslor or both. In our experience, it has been helpful to first ask the client what the metaphor means to him or her and to then assist the client in elaborating on that interpretation through active listening and inquiry about various

aspects of the metaphor that the client described. Counselors also need to be able to recognize, understand, and interpret the cultural symbols and values that may appear in metaphors (see Sue and Sue, 1990; Lee and Richardson, 1991). Finally, counselors need to consider ethical issues for use of metaphor. The counselor should consider the appropriateness of the intervention for a particular client, the client's willingness to engage in the intervention, and the counselor's own motivation for using metaphor.

Guidelines for the use of metaphor. The manner in which a counselor chooses to use metaphor as it relates to career will depends on the client, the client's position in the course of career development (of which the very notion is fraught with metaphor), and the features of the specific counseling situation. Counselors should be careful not to put a client on the spot, make the client uncomfortable or feel vulnerable. Rather, the idea of a metaphor can be introduced slowly and developed gradually over time. For example, clients' observations of their career behaviors during the counseling process may lead them to create effective career metaphors, this with only minimal support from the counselor. However, it is our observation that career counselors vary in the degree to which they appear open to metaphors from clients, and the degree to which they themselves make frequent use of metaphors during counseling. All things being equal, the metaphor-heavy counselor will be more likely to produce metaphor-using clients, regardless of the counselor's specific theoretical orientation.

Counselors should refrain from evaluating a client's career metaphor, except to the extent that they are adaptive or maladaptive to the client's functioning. However, there are certain situations where the counselor may be concerned, or even alarmed, by the metaphors that a client comes up with. For example, a client may come up with a very bleak metaphor such as "my job is a living hell." In this case, the counselor might ask the client for more

information about what a "living hell" means to the client (e.g., client does not get along with coworkers, client is experiencing sexual harrassment in the workplace, extremely low job satisfaction). Once further information is obtained, the counselor may be better able to determine -- with the collaboration of the client -- what the next best course of action might be (e.g., dealing with other personal issues before the career issues, referral to other resources). Counselors may want to determine whether a metaphor was damaging or inappropriate through (a) asking for elaboration to verify understanding/meaning, (b) ask for additional metaphor to better assess the situation, (c) having the client describe or name type of affect that he or she associates with the metaphor, (d) have the client use a rating scale to rate the intensity of affect associated with metaphor, and/or assess the typicality of any particular metaphor that a client may come up with (though the counselor must be cautious not to automatically assess the metaphor in a negative way just because it may be unusual - the client may simply be very imaginative or creative). As in any general counseling situation, the counselor using metaphor is advised to respect client individuality and to refrain from over-evaluation of a client's metaphor. The counselor, for example, should not give the impression of there being metaphors that are more acceptable than others.

The counselor should make an attempt to determine whether or not the use of metaphor had been an effective intervention. However, this assessment may be affected by the theoretical ortientation of the counselor and also counselor and client expectations for counseling. For an overview of methods for evaluating career interventions, see Spokane (1991).

Conclusions

One of Frank Parsons' legacies is linguistic as much as conceptual and arose from his use of metaphors for the meaning of career. Also, his advocacy of the vivid metaphor as a

counseling tool in and of itself was innovative. To carry on this aspect of his work, we must identify new metaphors that capture additional and contemporary aspects of work, vocation, and career that speak to contemporary realities. We have argued that both career clients and participants in vocational psychology research are useful sources for such novel metaphors, and we have discussed some examples. However, the underlying metaphors that actual career clients generate to understand their career situation may themselves be so debilitating that an effective counseling intervention may be to teach clients new and more positive career metaphors, along the lines of indirect instruction in metaphors proposed by Barker (1985) for a psychotherapeutic context, and along the lines pursued by the authors of the workbook for the Career Thoughts Inventory (CTI; Sampson, Peterson, Lenz, Reardon, & Saunders, 1996) for a career counseling context. The CTI workbook's design incorporates cognitive restructuring of dysfunctional thoughts through use of illustrative metaphors, such as a "cooking metaphor...to clarify the pyramid of information processing domains (i.e., as a list of ingredients in a recipe)" (Sampson et al., p. 15).

However, counseling students are generally not trained to assess and interpret the metaphors of clients, nor are they trained to teach new metaphors to clients in a counseling context. Perhaps we should therefore consider adding such content and skills to our training programs. Such efforts might make vocational training more interesting for students, which may make this training more attractive. Heppner, O'Brien, Hinkelman, and Humphrey (1994) derided standard vocational training as lacking creativity and attributed the decline in interest and involvement in vocational counseling to such lack of creativity (see also Heppner, O'Brien, Hinkelman, Flores, & Bikos, 1994). We refer the interested reader to some recent authors

(Gysbers & Moore, 1987, pp. 24-26; Brown & Brooks, 1991, pp. 301-302) who have included discussion of metaphors in recommended counseling techniques.

One might use metaphors as a tool in vocational and career research. For example, Cochran's (1990) proposal for narrative as a pradigm for career research includes mention of "the role of story telling to oneself" (p. 83) as a worthwhile topic of study; certainly, career metaphors are one way in which individuals can tell stories about themselves. It also strikes us that one might construct an inventory of career experience based on the agreement of respondents that particular career metaphors reflect their own career experience. Further, we speculate that one might develop scales of dimensions of career experience be aggregating responses to different sets of metaphors reflecting common themes, e.g., that of feeling trapped in one's career, or feeling unable to make a choice between alternatives. Individual differences in scores on such dimensions might suggest optimal next steps for career clients, and provide a window into the career experience of clients not afforded through existing measures of career development. This appears to be a promising direction worthy of future study. In a loose sense, such a measure would operationalize the translation between what Starishevsky and Matlin (1963) called "psychtalk" and "occtalk."

We will close by noting that although we have not explored the use of poetry in career interventions, such usage obviously provides a rich trove of metaphoric interpretations of the career experience. A more complete treatment of this subject would undoubtedly need to incorporate this work.

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